

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3638

C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 0570

PASS ALSO TO CU

E. O. 11652: DS

TAGS: SCUL IC

SUBJECT: LEFTIST VISITOR IMPRESSED BY US

1. MINISTRY OF COMMERCE OFFICIAL, WHO WAS PART OF RECENT LOFTLEIDIR- SPONSORED TRADE MISSION TO CHICAGO, CONFIRMED LOFTLEIDIR VIEW THAT TRIP WAS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL, NOT ONLY IN PROMOTING ICELANDIC IMAGE AND PRODUCTS IN US, BUT IN POSITIVE EFFECT OF VISIT TO US ON THREE LEFTIST MEMBERS OF GROUP. MINISTRY OFFICIAL CITED, IN PARTICULAR, TWO EXAMPLES INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLES ALLIANCE (COMMUNIST PARTY) ECONOMIST, THROSTUR OLAFSSON, WHO WAS MAKING FIRST TRIP TO US. OLAFSSON HAD EXPECTED TO RECEIVE " THIRD DEGREE" TREATMENT AT US IMMIGRATION, BUT INSTEAD WAS PROCESSED POLITELY AND IMMEDIATELY AND WITH ABSOLUTELY NO INDICATION THAT HE WAS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO INS PEOPLE. A SECOND INCIDENT NOTED WAS OLAFSSON'S ATTEMPT TO ELICIT FROM BLACK TAXI DRIVER EXPECTED ANSWERS ABOUT ILL TREATMENT OF AMERICAN NEGROES. INSTEAD, CAB DRIVER EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH HIS JOB, HIS HOME, AND LIFE IN US IN GENERAL. OLAFSSON, ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMANT, WAS OBVIOUSLY SURPRISED BY THESE AND OTHER INCIDENTS WHICH OCCURRED DURING TRIP. HE LATER EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN AND SATISFACTION WITH VISIT TO NEW YORK ENROUTE BACK.

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2. WHILE WE PROBABLY SHOULD NOT YET EXPECT OLAFSSON'S OCCASIONAL ARTICLES IN PEOPLES ALLIANCE DAILY, THJODVILJINN, TO REFLECT PRO- AMERICAN VIEW, IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT TRIP FOR OLAFSSON WAS CLEARLY BENEFICIAL TO US INTERESTS. EMB STRONGLY BELIEVES THAT MUCH CAN BE GAINED TO COUNTER STRONG AND GROWING ANTI- WESTERN AND ANTI- US FEELINGS AMONG ICELANDIC LEFTISTS THROUGH VISITS TO US. WHILE BLOC COUNTRIES APPEAR TO HAVE EXTENSIVE RESOURCES FOR SUCH TRIPS-- AT PRESENT TWO ICELANDIC MINISTERS ARE IN EASTERN EUROPE OR USSR -- WE HAVE BEEN SEVERELY LIMITED IN OUR ABILITY TO FUND SUCH VISITS. A LARGER PROGRAM ALONG THESE LINES WOULD BE INVALUABLE IN EFFORTS TO REACH ICELANDIC YOUTH AND CERTAIN LEFTISTS. NATURAL ISOLATION HERE CREATES SITUATION IN WHICH MANY, AND PARTICULARLY THE YOUNG, HARBOR GROSSLY DISTORTED IDEAS ABOUT THE US AND WORLD AFFAIRS IN GENERAL. OLAFSSON IS A GOOD, AND BY NO MEANS ATYPICAL, EXAMPLE. THERE IS PROBABLY NO BETTER WAY TO REACH THESE PEOPLE THAN TO LET THEM SEE US FOR THEMSELVES.

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